

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 251209

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, AR, US

SUBJECT:CONGRESSIONAL LETTERS TO PRESIDENT VIDELA

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6426 (A), BUENOS AIRES 6440 (B)

BUENOS AIRES 06575 (C)

1. DEPARTMENT IS AWARE OF THREE LETTERS ADDRESSED TO PRESIDENT VIDELA BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. THEY INCLUDE THE TWO NOTED IN REFTELS AND A THIRD SIGNED BY CONGRESSMAN HARRINGTON AND FIFTEEN OTHER HOUSE MEMBERS, INCLUDING FRASER, HARKIN AND KOCH, ASKING VIDELA TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF ANDRES CULTELLI OF URUGUAY, REGINA MACONDES OF BRAZIL, MARIO MUNOZ SALAS OF CHILE AND ARGENTINIAN RAYMUNDO GLEYZER.

2. LETTER MENTIONED IN REFTEL B DATED SEPTEMBER 28 IS FROM CONGRESSWOMAN ELIZABETH HOLTZMAN AND FIFTY-SIX OTHER HOUSE MEMBERS INCLUDING NINE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
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SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE.

TEXT FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: DEAR PRESIDENT VIDELA:

WE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS WISH TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN ABOUT RECENT REPORTS OF ANTI-SEMITIC VIOLENCE IN ARGENTINA.

IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, THE PRESS HAS REPORTED A NUMBER OF SHOOTINGS AND BOMBINGS OF JEWISH INSTITUTIONS AND BUSINESSES IN YOUR COUNTRY, AS WELL AS THE KIDNAPPING OF SEVERAL PROMINENT JEWS. THESE ATTACKS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN CONDONED AND EVEN ENCOURAGED BY SOME GROUPS WITHIN THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES. IN ADDITION, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE DISTRIBUTION OF NAZI LITERATURE WITHIN ARGENTINA HAS INCREASED SHARPLY IN RECENT MONTHS.

WE DEPLORE THESE INCIDENTS OF VIOLENT ANTI-SEMITISM WHICH ARE REPUGNANT TO AMERICANS AND PEOPLE OF GOODWILL EVERYWHERE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU, TOO, HAVE EXPRESSED YOUR OPPOSITION TO THESE ACTIONS.

WE MOST RESPECTFULLY CALL UPON YOU, THEREFORE, TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO END ANTI-SEMITIC TERRORISM IN YOUR COUNTRY.

SINCERELY, HOLTZMAN, ABZUG, ALLEN, AMBRO, BEARD, BEDELL, BINGHAM, BLANCHARD, BRODHEAD, BURTON, BURTON, CHISHOLM, CORMAN, DERWINSKI, DIGGS, DOWNEY, DRINAN, EDWARDS, EILBERG, EVANS, FASCELL, FRASER, FRENZEL, GUDE, HALL, HARKIN, HARRINGTON, HEINZ, HUGHES, KOCH, KREBS, LEHMAN, LONG, MAZZOLI, MEZVINSKY, MITCHELL, NIX, OTTINGER, PEPPER, RANGEL, RICHMOND, RIEGLE, RONCALIO, ROSENTHAL, ROYBAL, SANTINI, SOLARZ, STARK, TRAXLER, UDALL, VANDER VEEN, WAXMAN, WOLFF, WON PAT, WRIGHT, WYDLER, WHITEHURST. UNQUOTE.

3. HARKIN LETTER REFERRED TO IN REFTEL A DATED SEPTEMBER 7 STATES:

QUOTE: DEAR SIR:

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I AM WRITING IN REGARD TO FIVE THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS WHO ARE BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO IN YOUR COUNTRY SINCE THEY WERE ABDUCTED FROM THEIR RESIDENCE IN CORDOBA ON AUGUST 3, 1976.

I AM INFORMED BY EYEWITNESSES TO THE ABDUCTION THAT THE STUDENTS DANIEL GARCIA CARRANZA, ALEJANDRO DAUSA, JOSE LOUIS DESTEFANI AND ALFREDO VELANDA (ALL ARGENTINIANS). THE CHILEAN, HUMBERTO PANTAJO TAPIA, AND REV. WEEKS WERE TAKEN FROM THEIR HOUSE AFTER BEING BOUND, GAGGED AND, IN

AT LEAST ONE CASE BEATEN BY A GROUP OF MEN IN PLAIN CLOTHES, ARMED WITH SUBMACHINE GUNS. THESE MEN OFFERED

NO IDENTIFICATION OTHER THAN A STATEMENT TO A WITNESS THAT THEY WERE MONTONEROS. THE STUDENTS AND REV. WEEKS WERE TAKEN WITHIN SEVERAL HOURS TO A LOCAL JAIL AND HAVE SINCE BEEN TRANSFERRED AT LEAST ONCE. REV. WEEKS WAS RELEASED ONLY AFTER PROTESTS BY MY GOVERNMENT. THE STUDENTS REMAIN IMPRISONED.

I WISH TO KNOW WHAT THE LEGAL STATUS OF EACH STUDENT IS. HAVE ANY CHARGES BEEN FILED AGAINST ANY ONE OF THEM? WHERE ARE THEY BEING HELD? HOW LONG MAY THEY BE HELD UNDER YOUR LAW BEFORE CHARGES MUST BE FILED OR THEY MUST BE RELEASED? SPECIFICALLY WHAT EVIDENCE DOES YOUR GOVERNMENT HAVE THAT ANY OF THE STUDENTS HAS ENGAGED IN ANY ACT OF SUBVERSION AGAINST YOUR GOVERNMENT? WERE THE MEN WHO ABDUCTED REV. WEEKS AND THE STUDENTS POLICE OR MILITARY OFFICIALS? WERE THEY ACTING IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY AT THE TIME? IF SO, IS THIS TYPICAL AS POLICE PROCEDURES IN ARGENTINA? IF NOT, HAVE ANY ACTIONS BEEN TAKEN BY YOU OR OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO DISCIPLINE THE OFFICIALS INVOLVED AND TO ENSURE THAT SUCH PRACTICE CEASE? I AM EAGER TO HEAR ANYTHING FROM YOU THAT WOULD JUSTIFY THE METHODS WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT USED IN THIS MATTER. BASED ON THE ACCOUNTS OF THE INCIDENT BY WITNESSES AND SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED, I PRESENTLY CAN FIND NO SUCH JUSTIFICATION FOR THESE ACTIONS.

I AM WELL AWARE THAT TERRORISTS ON BOTH ENDS OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM THREATEN THE STABILITY OF YOUR NATION.
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I CONDEMN ALL TERRORIST ENDEAVORS REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGICAL ORIGIN. HOWEVER, IT IS APPARENT THAT RIGHT-WING TERRORISTS ARE TOLERATED IN SOME AREAS BY POLICY AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES AND, IN SOME CASES, HAVE SECURED THE ACTIVE COOPERATION OF THESE OFFICIALS IN ASSAULTS ON ARGENTINE CITIZENS, POLITICAL REFUGEES FROM OTHER NATIONS AND U.S. CITIZENS WHO ARE GUILTY ONLY OF HOLDING VIEWS AND OPINIONS CONTRARY TO THOSE OF THE OFFICIALS.

THE CASE I HAVE NOTED ABOVE IS ONLY ONE OF A NUMBER WHICH ILLUSTRATE THE IMPUNITY WITH WHICH RIGHT-WING TERRORISTS ACT IN YOUR COUNTRY, IN CONTRAST TO GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS SIMILAR LEFT-WING ACTIVITIES. AS ALLIES OF ARGENTINA AND FRIENDS OF YOUR PEOPLE, WE LOOK FAVORABLY UPON EFFORTS TO RESTORE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY. IN EQUAL MEASURE, WE DEPLORE THE SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS RESULTING IN POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND INCREASING POLITI-

CAL POLARIZATION RATHER THAN CIVIL PEACE. SUCH BRUTAL ATTEMPTS TO FORCE POLITICAL CONFORMITY UPON THE POPULATION FALL WITHIN THE SHADOW OF TOTALITARIANISM AND HAVE NO PLACE IN ANY CIVILIZED SOCIETY WHICH PROFESSES BELIEF IN

THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE TO RULE THEMSELVES.

I AM HOPEFUL THAT YOUR RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS WILL INDICATE A WILLINGNESS TO APPLY THE LAW IN EQUAL MEASURE TO ALL RESIDENTS OF YOUR COUNTRY. MANY MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS WOULD SUPPORT EFFORTS TO CEASE THE ABUSE OF AUTHORITY BY A LIMITED NUMBER OF ARGENTINIAN POLICE AND MILITARY OFFICIALS. SUCH EFFORTS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IN ORDER TO RECTIFY ACTIONS WHICH ARE DESTRUCTIVE BOTH OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN YOUR COUNTRY AND OF THE LONG HISTORY OF AMICABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES.

I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT I SPEAK IN A SPIRIT OF CONCERN FOR A CONTINUATION OF THAT RELATIONSHIP. YOUR PROMPT AND THOROUGH REPLY WILL BE APPRECIATED.

SINCERELY, TOM HARKIN.

4. TEXT OF THIRD LETTER DATED AUGUST 13 FOLLOWS:
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QUOTE: DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS WRITE TO YOU TODAY DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY, AND RESPECTFULLY REQUEST YOUR INTERVENTION IN THE FOLLOWING CASES: MR. ANDRES CULTELLI, A URUGUAYAN; MRS. REGINA MACONDES, A BRAZILIAN; MR. MARIO MUNOZ SALAS, A CHILEAN; AND RAYMUNDO GLEYZER, AN INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN AND RESPECTED FILMMAKER. AS YOU INDICATED IN YOUR INAUGURAL ADDRESS, CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS A CONCERN OF HUMANITY NOT DEPENDENT ON INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS, BUT ON CONCRETE ACTIONS. THEREFORE, WE FEEL CONFIDENT THAT YOU WILL INVESTIGATE THOROUGHLY THE ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED HEREIN.

MR. ANDRES CULTELLI, A URUGUAYAN WHO SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM IN YOUR COUNTRY, WAS FIRST ARRESTED IN MARCH 1975, BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ISABEL PERON. AS OF APRIL OF THIS YEAR, MR. CULTELLI'S FAMILY WAS STILL UNAWARE OF ANY OFFICIAL CHARGES AGAINST HIM. RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES, AMBASSADOR VAZQUEZ RELEASED INFORMATION ON JULY 1ST THAT MR. CULTELLI WAS BEING HELD FOR VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW 20.840 (SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES). RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE ALLEGED THAT ARGENTINE AND URUGUAYAN OFFICIALS HAVE TORTURED

HIM EXTENSIVELY SINCE HIS ARREST. IF THE ALLEGATION IS TRUE, THEN MR. HARRINGTON'S PREVIOUS REQUEST THAT MR. CULTELLI NOT BE EXTRADITED TO URUGUAY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES IS UNDERSTANDABLY JUSTIFIED.

THE SECOND CASE INVOLVES MRS. REGINA MACONDES, A BRAZILIAN

NATIONAL, WHO WAS ARRESTED APRIL 10, 1976. THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WAS URGED AT THAT TIME TO RELEASE INFORMATION AS TO WHERE SHE WAS BEING HELD AND ON WHAT CHARGE. IT WAS ALSO REQUESTED THAT SHE NOT BE EXTRADITED TO BRAZIL DUE TO THAT GOVERNMENT'S MANIFEST DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. MRS. MACONDES' FATE IS AS YET STILL UNKNOWN TO US.

THE THIRD CASE, THAT OF MR. MARIO MUNOZ SALAS, A CHILEAN UNIONIST, IS SIMILAR TO THE PREVIOUS ONES. MR. MUNOZ
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WAS ALSO A NON-ARGENTINE SEEKING POLITICAL ASYLUM IN YOUR COUNTRY. IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT THIS INDIVIDUAL IS BEING HUNTED ON THE ORDERS TO BE SHOT ON SIGHT. WE ONCE AGAIN EXTEND THE REQUEST THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY BE GRANTED SAFE CONDUCT OUT OF ARGENTINA. AS MR. HARRINGTON NOTED IN HIS LETTER DATED JUNE 4, 1976, TO AMBASSADOR VAZQUEZ, EXTRADITION OF THIS MAN TO CHILE WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO SENTENCING HIM TO INDEFINITE INCARCERATION OR DEATH. WE, THEREFORE, URGE THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO REJECT ANY COURSE THAT WOULD DENY MR. MUNOZ' RIGHT TO LIFE AND LIBERTY BECAUSE OF HIS POLITICAL BELIEFS.

ALSO EXTREMELY DISTURBING TO US IS THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FILM MAKER, RAYMUNDO GLEYZER, WHO WAS IN ARGENTINA TO VISIT HIS FIVE-YEAR OLD SON. WE URGE THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IN THE STRONGEST TERMS TO INVESTIGATE HIS DISAPPEARANCE. IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT MR. GLEYZER, ALONG WITH HAROLDO CONTI, IS TO BE FOUND AT THE SPECIAL TORTURE CENTER NEAR THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OF EZEIZA, AND BOTH THEIR CONDITIONS ARE GRAVE. THEREFORE, WE REQUEST THAT BOTH MR. GLEYZER AND MR. CONTI BE GRANTED THE RESPECT WHICH THEIR REPUTATION ENTITLES THEM TO, AND THAT THEY BE RELEASED, FOR THEIR LOSS WOULD INDEED BE TRAGIC.

MR. PRESIDENT, WE APPEAL TO YOUR SENSE OF HUMANITY, AND RESPECTFULLY REMIND YOU OF YOUR INAUGURAL PROMISE TO RE-ESTABLISH A RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA. IN ANY EVENT, WE TRUST THAT YOU WILL WANT TO INITIATE A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED HEREIN.

YOURS RESPECTFULLY, MICHAEL J. HARRINGTON, FRASER, SCHROEDER, HARKIN, HAWKINS, BINGHAM, ABZUB, CONTI, DRINAN, FRENZEL, KOCH, STARK, ROSENTHAL, FLOOD, SOLARZ, RIEGLE.

5. WE HAVE DISCUSSED LETTERS WITH CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES OF SIGNATORIES, EMPHASIZING THE INADVISABILITY OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WRITING DIRECTLY TO OFFICIALS (INDEED, IN THIS CASE, A HEAD OF STATE) OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. THEY APPEAR
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SENSITIVE TO OUR CONCERNS AND APPEARED WILLING TO INFORM THE DEPARTMENT BEFORE ANY LETTERS ARE SENT IN THE FUTURE.

6. FYI: AS YOU CAN SEE THE LETTERS DIFFER ONE FROM THE OTHER. THEY ALL REFLECT THE INCREASED CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ARGENTINA WHICH HAS BEEN STIMULATED BY THE WIDESPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE OF DEVELOPMENTS THERE, AS DOES THE VERY STRONG CRITICISM OF GOA ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH SURFACED AT THE RECENT FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS. WE DISAPPROVE OF THE PRACTICE OF MEMBERS WRITING DIRECTLY TO OFFICIALS OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND DO NOT WANT TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER EXCHANGES AND DO NOT FEEL IT ADVISABLE THAT WE ACT AS A TRANSMISSION BELT. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT WANT TO DISCOURAGE GOA RESPONDING TO LETTERS. END FYI.

7. YOU SHOULD TELL GOA THAT THE PROCEDURES USED AND THE SUBSTANCE OF A RESPONSE BY GOA TO THE LETTERS IS A DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY GOA.

8. LETTER OF REFTEL B& C SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO FOREIGN MINISTRY WITH EXPLANATION THAT WE HAVE BEEN REQUESTED BY SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO TRANSMIT THE LETTER. ROBINSON

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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